

until the building of the present school in 1969. Due to increased enrollment, a second floor addition was built in 1988. St. John the Evangelist has a current enrollment of 351 students.

The Saint John community began commemorating the 150th anniversary of St. John the Evangelist School on Friday, April 18, 1997, with an all-day celebration, entitled "150 Years of Quality Catholic Education." The day's events, which took place in the school gymnasium, included a prayer service, a giant birthday cake, and a program put together by the St. John the Evangelist students. The student program depicted the theme "Eras of Education" with costumed, musical presentations of past decades. Eighth-graders in turn-of-the century garb portrayed the construction of the Panama Canal, a malaria outbreak, and such inventions as the airplane, toaster, and Model T. Ford. Each class within the school researched an assigned era and similarly presented their interpretations. School Principal, Sister Angela Mellady, commented that the students learned a great deal about American history, as well as the heritage of their school, while planning the event.

Some celebration activities which will take place throughout the year, include the wearing of St. John the Evangelist birthday celebration shirts each Friday in place of the student uniform, and an appreciation luncheon for local businessmen who have supported the school throughout the years. The anniversary celebration will close with a 150th birthday reunion this coming Saturday, July 12, 1997. Approximately 1,000 St. John the Evangelist alumni have been invited to the reunion, where past experiences and memories will be shared.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again extend my most heartfelt congratulations to St. John the Evangelist School on achieving its sesquicentennial anniversary. Everyone involved in the school's growth and success over the years should be commended, as the values and quality instruction provided to students have undoubtedly served as a cornerstone of education in the Saint John, IN community.

TRIBUTE TO MR. VIRGIL KOECHNER

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to a distinguished gentleman from the Fourth Congressional District of Missouri, Virgil Koechner. He recently retired after more than 44 years of dedicated service for the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company.

Mr. Koechner, from California, MO, served for 5 years in the United States Navy before beginning work for Southwestern Bell in 1952. He was not only an employee of Southwestern Bell, but was also elected local president of the Communications Workers of America for 32 consecutive years. In retirement, Mr. Koechner plans to stay active in the labor movement.

Mr. Koechner and his wife Mary Jane have been long time friends of mine. It is dedicated people like Virgil Koechner who are the heart and soul of what makes this country great. I

know that other Members of this body join me in congratulating Virgil Koechner on his retirement and wish him the very best in the days ahead.

FARMERS CELEBRATE NEW FREEDOM

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, last year Congress passed a farm bill which provided farmers with the freedom they need to respond to market forces and more effectively compete in the global marketplace. This legislation represents a very fundamental departure from previous farm policy and allows much greater flexibility in planting decisions. Farmers have responded favorably to this new independence which places the decisions where they belong—with the farmers, not the Federal Government. This Member would like to commend to his colleagues the following editorial from the July 4, 1997, edition of the Lincoln Journal-Star, which highlights the positive changes brought about by the 1996 farm bill.

By the way, this editorial viewpoint represents a turnaround in views by this Lincoln newspaper—apparently based upon the results obtained.

[From the Lincoln Journal Star, July 4, 1997]

FARMERS GET MORE FREEDOM, WHICH WILL BENEFIT EVERYONE

This Fourth of July, many farmers are celebrating their newfound independence.

In a front-page story in the Journal Star this week, Associated Press writer Robyn Tysver drew this telling image:

"Free at last. Free at last," Minden farmer LaMoine Smith warbled one morning from the field on his cellular phone."

The celebration is because this year, for the first time in decades, farmers are free to plant what they want, thanks to the Freedom to Farm Act. No more government restrictions. No more trips to the Farm Service Agency in town to submit a farm plan. No more certification of acres.

The Journal Star joins in the celebration. Putting decision-making in the hands of the farmers will, in the long run, benefit them and the taxpayers who have been subsidizing them. The change puts incentives before farmers to become better business managers. There are rewards to stay on the cutting edge.

The picture of farmer Smith in the field cheering on his cellular phone is an accurate one, for city folk who have lost contact with agriculture. Farming ain't like the reruns of "Green Acres." Farming today is cellular phones, commodity prices by computer modem, fertilization by Global Position System and more.

The farmers who learn to use those hi-tech tools most efficiently will be the ones reaping the greatest rewards under the new system. Under the new system, there are real decisions to be made. The best decision-makers are the ones who will prosper.

In the initial year of the Freedom to Farm Act, there have been some changes in planting patterns, but farmers generally were cautious.

Because land no longer must remain idle under government regulation, farmers put more into production. For example, the num-

ber of acres planted in corn went up by 600,000 in comparison with last year.

Other responses were more directly market-driven. This spring, soybeans were at \$8.50 a bushel, prompting Nebraska farmers to plant 650,000 acres more than last year.

There was also a little experimentation. Farmers in Kansas planted 12,000 acres of cotton. Farmers in Mississippi planted 550,000 acres of corn.

It's easy to celebrate this year, we acknowledge, because for now farmers have the best of both worlds. They have both freedom and a safety net, because the farm payments still exist. The payments will be reduced gradually over a seven-year period. This year, farmers still have a fallback if they made the wrong decisions last spring.

By 2002, when price-support guarantees are scheduled to end, there will no longer be a safety net. Freedom has its price.

Even now, support for the Freedom to Farm Act is far from universal. A majority of farmers favor it, but there is a minority who were happy with old regulations and the comfort they brought.

Their ranks could grow if the weather puts bumper crops of soybeans and corn on the markets this fall, which would depress prices.

Farmers might have more freedom this Fourth of July, but not from worrying about the weather. Some things never change.

PETER M. WEBER—A DISTINGUISHED RECORD OF SERVICE TO THE CITY AND PEOPLE OF ROLLING HILLS ESTATES

HON. JANE HARMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 10, 1997

Ms. HARMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Councilman Peter M. Weber for 23 distinguished years of service to the city of Rolling Hills Estates and to the citizens of the 36th Congressional District.

No Councilmember in the history of Rolling Hills Estates has served the City Council for more years than Peter Weber. He has served six 4-year terms as councilman, including 5 1-year terms as mayor. Marked by his affection for and dedication to preserving the city's unique character, he stood behind the critical decisions that have preserved its rural atmosphere and fostered its financial strength. To provide for the city quality recreation, Councilman Weber lobbied in favor of bringing the city stables under Rolling Hills Estates management. Also during his tenure, the annual Tracy Austin Tournament was brought under the auspices of the city's Park and Recreation Commission. Further improving the scenic qualities of the city, both Ernie Howlett and Highridge Parks were developed. In addition to parks, Peter Weber successfully prioritized the establishment of nature preserves. During his tenure, George F. Canyon and the Chandler Preserve were acquired and dedicated as open space in perpetuity, and the George F. Canyon Nature Center was conceptualized and subsequently opened to the public. These assets of Rolling Hills Estates remind us of the dedication and vision Councilman Weber had for the community, and they should be sources of great pride for Peter Weber.

Councilman Weber was instrumental in the creation of the Peninsula Emergency Response Team [PERT], an information-gather-